

## **A Life in Tibet and in the West: The Autobiography of Geshe Jampa Gyatso**

I am going to tell you a part of my life to illustrate what took place during the days in Tibet before the invasion of the Chinese – telling in particular about life in the monasteries, the program of studies and debate followed by the monks, the annual program, the subdivisions in the courses, and the complete program necessary to obtain the title of geshe (Doctor of Philosophy) that, given one's abilities and specialization, one wants to obtain, lasts from fifteen to twenty-five years of study.

This story, based on my experience, ends with the day on which I received the degree of geshe lharampa. I'm not going to tell you only about my life because it alone is not important, but rather I will speak about the dharma that I have studied and of its significance, so that the two things together have a larger value.

My hope is that this talk might entertain you, and possibly inspire you, and increase your enthusiasm for study and practice. I hope that this talk will help you to understand how it is possible to practice the dharma and at the same time carry on with your work and daily life. To unite your work with spiritual practice is a very important aspect of life: one that will help you to grow in a way that is conscious and constructive.

I was born in 1931, the first of seven brothers, in a nomadic family in an area called Dham close to the capital city of Lhasa. The name "Dham" means "choice" and was given by a Mongolian king at a time in which Tibet was at war with Mongolia. Dham is located at the foot of Mount Nyen Chen Tan-la: the lower part of which is used for grazing, the central part being rocky, and the peak always covered with snow and ice. Behind the mountain one finds the lake called Nam Cho Chumo. If you were to make a complete circuit of this lake it would take you seven days. It is a special lake and it is possible, if you are in the area, to hear the sounds of damarus (ritual drums), bells, and other instruments used in tantric rituals. I was told about these extraordinary phenomena by some monk friends who witnessed them. Many nomads also said that they had seen a dragon emerge from the lake and then fly over it; the clouds then sank and the dragon flew over them. I was never there – however, I have seen a flying dragon.

The Tibetan population was composed of people of various social classes such as peasants, merchants, nomadic groups, artisans, artists, engineers, architects, lawyers, and so forth, as you would find in any country's social and political organization, except for their being a high percentage of religious people who lived in the numerous monasteries.

There were five classes of nomads. The richest possessed many animals such as sheep, horses and yaks (a type of highland buffalo) and lived in strong tents made of yak hair. The largest tent was used for ceremonies in which people would come together for prayer and where occasionally a lama would give Buddhist teachings. They also possessed stores of grain, barley, lentils, and fruit that had been gathered, which were kept in sacks made of yak hair. The second class of nomads had fewer animals. The third, even less, and so on. The fifth type, who were the least rich lived in small tents and would have about fifty yaks, two or three horses, and many goats. There was yet another class of nomad similar to gypsies that didn't have a fixed residence.

I was born into the fourth class and my family had enough possessions that we did not have to go into debt. My mother, Tsering Lamo, was very fat. When I attended preliminary classes in Sera Je monastery my friends would tease me, saying that my mother had a chest as big as a piazza; and I would respond that they had seen only her

front part and not her rear!

My mother was twenty-five years old when I was born and my father, Konchog Sandup, was twenty-four. According to the Tibetan calendar, I was born in the year of the water monkey. From the age of two I suffered from a serious illness. My mother often told me that when I seemed more dead than alive, my grandmother performed religious rites and, thanks to their power, my breathing improved and I eventually overcame the crisis. After the age of four, I didn't suffer from this illness anymore.

Often, when I met the monks of a nearby monastery, I observed that they were tranquil, unlike the majority of the lay people who lived in families nearby; and they also didn't suffer from the jealousy that would divide people in the lay community.

One time my family entertained a lama of the Nyingmapa tradition – followers of the teachings of Padmasambhava. He prophesied to my mother that I would leave my family when I was thirteen to become a monk. He said, "When your son is thirteen you will not have to take care of him, rather he will be able to look after himself," a prediction that was told to me only after I had arrived at Sera Je monastery.

When I was seven years old I began working as a shepherd and lived in the open air like a cowboy until I was twelve. In the morning, before bringing the animals to pasture, I would make a breakfast of tsampa (a mixture of barley flour, butter, and dried meat) and drink yogurt or tea. I was young and I liked to throw the yogurt on the ground and then lick it with my tongue. I also made balls like marbles out of the tsampa and threw these along the ground and then ran after them on all fours and picked them up with my mouth. While I was in the pasture I used to entertain myself by modeling human and animal figures from the muddy clay. The first month of the Tibetan year begins in the middle of February and it is very cold. During this time, there were many lambs and small goats in the herd that had been born very recently and to protect them I would put them inside my long, heavy wool coat, wrapping them in a cloak so that I could carry them when I moved from one area to another. I learned to read and write in the pasture and always carried a dharma text with me called *The Nine Points of Dedication*. I remember reading it many times.

In Tibet there are many animals and the most common is the wild yak, there being thousands of them. There are also wild horses, called *chian*, and tame horses, called *ta*, as well as many species of deer – one in particular with huge horns that grow to be so big that they prevent it from grazing and it risks dying of hunger. Those who understand the dharma are able to understand that these are karmic consequences – due to causes that have been created in previous lives. The *shava* is another type of deer with horns at a right angle, which are used by peasants to dig up a type of sweet potato, and which can also be used as a walking stick. Another type of deer, similar to sheep, lives in herds and is hunted for its meat. Another animal that is always hunted for its meat is similar to a goat but with a mouse-like tail, large in the body, with fine limbs, and since it is an herbivore it doesn't harm anyone. Another animal, which lives among the rocks and in the valleys, is similar to a cat but with a very curious distinguishing habit: it captures fish from the rivers and then leaves them as a meal for the owls. It is hunted not for its meat, but for its highly valued fur. To capture it, an astute hunter finds out where the owls live and waits to see if the animal appears. There is another animal that is called the *para*, which is small and has the ability to kill a yak. The large ones kill them by entering the yak's intestine through the anus and then, once they are inside, eating away at the yak; while the small one's kill them by sucking the yak's blood like a vampire. They spread

through the plains where their victims, the yaks, graze. There is also an animal called the tzoo, which is a cross between a female yak and a bull. The male is very strong in the fields and the female gives very good milk, which is used to make yogurt.

These are the animals most characteristic of Tibet. Then, naturally, there are animals that are common in other countries, such as monkeys, panthers, bears, etc.

Many areas of Tibet are completely covered by snow and ice. Living in these places is the snow lion, an animal which one very rarely succeeds in seeing. The previous incarnation of Tomo Geshe – who actually lives in America – succeeded, in an area called The Five Sisters, to milk a snow lioness, drawing from it the nectar with which he made medicinal pills. Another animal that is rarely seen is the yeti, the abominable snowman that looks like something between a human and a monkey. They are very dangerous and sometimes they approach the tents of the nomads who have sheep and other animals, but the dogs that tend the herds perform a great service in chasing them away. The yetis, defending themselves as they flee, grab handfuls of earth and stones and throw them over their shoulders. They have also been known to kill human beings. I once saw a female yeti carrying her little ones while she forded a river.

As in any other country, the food changes with the changing seasons. In summer, the most common foods are tsampa and tea, which is prepared very often. Small children are given very small amounts of tea. For breakfast, which is called bali in Tibetan, one usually eats a particular cheese and drinks a creamy milk, which is used in the evening for a yogurt drink, and which has properties that settle the sleep. In wintertime, one often eats meat and a cheese soup with carrots, which is always very pleasant. This is the main dish of the day and it is always served in abundance. In the evenings, a light soup is prepared and bread is eaten very rarely.

Winter does not allow for the cultivation of vegetables, so we would keep a supply of dried vegetables. It is possible, however, to collect herbs and greens that grow naturally, as well as ones that are not really pleasant, such as nettles. Tibetans used to cook them very well with recipes coming from Milarepa. I'm joking because Milarepa was a great meditator and saint who lived as a hermit in complete renunciation, and who ate only raw nettles, becoming a buddha in that same life – and whose teachings and poetic songs were greatly inspired by the practice of dharma. This, briefly, is the life of the nomads. The other social classes were distinguished according to their means and the region in which they lived.

## Entrance in the Monastery

At the age of thirteen I entered the monastery of Sera Je – which was home to about 6,000 monks – and received the preliminary vows. The great lama, Kujam Rinpoche, who was considered a living emanation of Buddha Maitreya (who will manifest as the fifth buddha of this fortunate era), shaved my head. Subsequently, at the age of fifteen, I received the getsul ordination of a novice monk from Kyabje Tari Dorje Chan, who gave me the name Losang Sherab, which means, “mind of virtue and wisdom.” When I became a gelong, or fully ordained monk, Kujam Rinpoche gave me the name Jampa Gyatso, which means, “ocean of great love.” At sixteen, I began the study of logic – the understanding of which is very important at the beginning of one’s studies – under the guidance of the teacher Geshe Tashi Bum.

Also at sixteen, I received the initiation of White Tara from Kyabje Lazum Rinpoche, who was considered to be the manifestation of Tara, and then took on the commitment to recite a brief praise to Manjushri daily. If one does the practice of White Tara during a lunar eclipse, one rises before dawn, takes the eight mahayana precepts and completes the specific meditation. One puts a pea seed under the tongue, reciting continuously the essential mantra: om waki de na ma. At the end of the eclipse one stops reciting and removes the seed from under the tongue: if it has sprouted, it means that one has attained the siddhi (power) of White Tara’s wisdom, which consists of the capacity to memorize easily whatever text one reads.

Kyabje Lazum Rinpoche was born in Nepal and it was foretold that he would live to the age of eighty-four; but, in fact, he left his body at the age of eighty-seven. He held the complete lineage of tantric initiations from the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism: Nyingmapa, Kagyupa, Sakyapa, and Gelugpa. He was the fifth descendent in the lineage of the teachings from Vajrayogini, and it was said that if one wanted to receive the spiritual energy of this lineage one had to go to him.

At Sera Je there also lived another great being called Kyabje Kensur Dorje Chan, from whom I received the initiation of Sarwati, for developing a mind acute in studies and for discerning the significance of the dharma. This great lama has reincarnated in Nepal.

Sera monastery is divided into three principal universities: Sera Je, Sera Me, and Sera Gampa.

Sometimes someone would put offerings for tea in a large container and then, putting it on his head, go around the monastery informing everyone that the following morning there would be an offering of tea. Sometimes I would fall asleep during the prayers: the candle would gutter and I would fall and hit my head on the table. Then someone would sound the bell and everyone would go to their classes.

The monastery had a very large kitchen and there were also lay people who worked there.

I would wake at four in the morning, recite a prayer to Manjushri, wash myself, clean my room, and then prepare my altar with offerings of water, food, incense, and light. It was my task to prepare breakfast for the monks who lived in my section. While doing this, I would put a page of text nearby while I was cleaning and every so often I would have a look at it so that I could memorize the verses.

After breakfast, sometimes I would go to the meditation hall with other monks for the morning rituals and we would drink some tea; other times I would stay behind and study texts. The sounding of a gong would indicate the beginning of debate, after which there

would be another session that would end around midday.

Then I would go to cook for my companions, unless my parents or other family had brought food. I lived with five or six other monks and it was my job to see that they never lacked food. My lower robes were always dirty with dried dung or ashes and my friends called me “the Cook of Simcam.” Simcam was the name of our section and meant: “room of high persons.” My teacher, who was the one in charge of discipline in the monastery, would often give me the task of cleaning His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s room, which was located over the main assembly hall. Often, guests would stay there, sometimes wanting to have discussions, or just to get information. The old monks had better chores than the younger ones; often they didn’t have any. I had the responsibility of receiving guests from the country and foreigners.

After lunch I would go to my teacher for teachings; then I would return to my room for tea. Around 2:00 or 2:30 p.m. there was afternoon debate class – which would last for three or four hours – and by the time I returned to my room it would be sunset. I would cook some tukpa (noodle soup) or a simple dish of barley flour. After dinner, there was an evening debate class that would end at around 10:00 p.m.; I would read some more texts, recite some prayers, and finally go to sleep. In the summer I would wake up around 4:00 a.m. I always tried not to put off anything until the next day that I should have done that day, and I tried never to say, “Today I don’t want to study because I’m tired.” I think that this is something that you should try to do as well.

The political administration of Tibet at that time was managed by Drepung monastery and during the main events they were in charge of organizing them.

The Tibetan New Year was traditionally celebrated for three days and was followed by the prayer festival known as Monlam, which was held in Lhasa. All the monks from the monasteries, including the three great monasteries, would meet for Monlam, which would last for twenty-one days. During the festival there would be philosophical debate, theatrical shows, dance, sporting events, jugglers, and various other attractions – but above all it was a spiritual gathering.

This festival time also coincided with the final exams for the geshe degree for those who had finished their studies. This title attests to the person’s abilities – both intellectual and as a practitioner – in the teachings of the Buddhist doctrine. The examination of the candidates who were being put forward took place in public debates. Each day – before His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the other monks from the three great monasteries – debates took place in three major areas of study. The first subject was in the logic text of the Indian Buddhist pandit Dignaga, called *Pramanavartika*, or Valid Cognition. The second subject, debated in the afternoon, was the *Prajnaparamita*, or Perfection of Wisdom, which contains an explanation of the stages of the path in accordance with the three principal vehicles of Buddhism: hinayana, mahayana, and tantrayana. Another subject of debate was the emptiness of phenomena and the *Madhyamika*, or Middle Way. In the evening the subjects were the *Abhidharmakosha* (an explanation of metaphysics and a description of the universe) and the *Vinaya* (an explanation of ethical discipline).

There was a commission of qualified geshe who would listen to and evaluate the candidates and give marks to those who would be examined by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Normally, to pass the exam and receive the title of geshe, one would have to return to His Holiness’s house for a period of about two weeks so His Holiness could verify personally that the candidate was truly qualified to obtain the title. This was not the case if

one was going for a lesser qualification. Those who obtained the geshe title had to have a very vast consciousness: the exam was very difficult and the topics were covered very thoroughly. During the final day of Monlam, an enormous torma (ritual cake) would be prepared, which would then be thrown in a fire to eliminate interferences for the new year, and during this ritual the guards for His Holiness would fire shots in the air. The following day marked the beginning of the sporting competitions, which would include archery and horse races. The horses (without riders) had to cover ten miles. There were also weightlifting competitions: the athletes would sprinkle themselves and the weights with oil to succeed in lifting the weights above their shoulders.

On the twenty-ninth day of the first Tibetan month the monks would begin their new studies, which would continue for nineteen days, after which there would be another prayer festival. This tradition, called To Chomo Lam, had begun with the Fifth Dalai Lama.

Every year one would tackle eight subjects of study: four of these would last for one month, the others would last for four months. There were then another three courses that would last for fifteen days, and one other that would last for twenty.

The time for the eight courses was divided as follows: the first course began at the beginning of the year (at the end of January) and finished on February 19<sup>th</sup>; the second course began on March 8<sup>th</sup> and finished on April 7<sup>th</sup>; the third course began on April 17<sup>th</sup> and finished on the 28<sup>th</sup>; the fourth course began on May 27<sup>th</sup> and finished on June 16<sup>th</sup>; the fifth course generally began on July 15<sup>th</sup> and finished at the end of the month; the sixth course began August 16<sup>th</sup> and finished at the end of the month; the seventh course began on September 17<sup>th</sup> and finished on October 19<sup>th</sup>; and the eighth course began on November 18<sup>th</sup> and finished on December 18<sup>th</sup>.

Before the courses started the monks used to have to go outside the monastery and beg for wood to burn in order to keep the rule set out by the Buddha saying that monks have to be supported by charity. The monks would go into the city and the countryside to beg for wood, not just because they were poor. There are two important aspects to this begging: the first is so that the disciples of the Buddha liberate themselves from attachment to comfort, and the second is so that those who give to the monks can acquire merit. In this same way, the Buddha had gone out begging. The monks are therefore meant to do the same and to behave properly, acting as a source of joy and spiritual inspiration, and a cause of great merit for the donors.

## Life in the Monastery

Waking time in the monastery was 3:30 a.m. We would then go into the common meditation hall of the three colleges where we would drink tea with milk, but before drinking, reciting the mantra: om ah hum. Oommm aaahhh hummmmm – and at the same time someone beat time with a mala against the victory flag on the terrace on top of the monastery. All this took place three times and then in the interval they would recite prayers. The monks who were not yet in the gompa (meditation hall), before entering would do prostrations and the signal for entering was when they played the horns and conch shells. After this, the monks would put on their hats and sit in their places beginning with prayers to Lama Tsongkhapa. Then, at a certain point, the monk in charge of discipline would take off his hat as a signal and start off a chorus of the letter om, with which there arose a very strong vibration. After that, we would take refuge, generate bodhicitta, and then meditate on the Four Immeasurables: equanimity, love, compassion, and joy. Then we would recite prayers to the protector Palden Lhamo. After that, money offerings would be distributed at the sound of the conch. Finally, we would return to our rooms and the gong would sound.

The first class would generally begin with the recitation of the one hundred and eight volumes of teachings of the Buddha, which would last for three days. Such readings wouldn't take place in the meditation hall, but in the courtyards of each section of the monastery. In the final three days we would recite the Twenty-One Praises of Tara sixty times per session. In between these six days there would be debates between the monks of the various classes. In the morning the gong would sound, the monks – wearing their hats – would present themselves before the abbot and they would recite the verses that would announce the beginning of the debates. The dhi, which is the first syllable of the prayer, expresses the essence of the mind of Manjushri: “May I be skillful in debate and may I be able to teach it to others.” The monks would then prostrate three times before the abbot, who would bless them, reciting root verses from the Abhisamayalamkara. Each class had a different subject of study, such as the Vinaya, the Abhidharma, etc. In addition, we had to study and memorize the various commentaries on the root texts. The students would arrange themselves, sitting in a circle, and a monk would then sit in the middle and recite from memory the text he had studied. The lower classes would have to recite the text in very loud voices.

The gong would announce the hour for tea and its sound would reverberate throughout the monastery. If someone didn't bring his proper personal tea bowl he would have to take off his hat as a sign. There was always someone, who in order to return to his room, would come up with a typical excuse: “My father came to find me,” or, “it was my turn to clean,” etc.

During the second interval they would give us tukpa and some people would continue reciting root verses from the Abhisamayalamkara or from the Madhyamika. We would also recite prayers with different tones and rhythms. After tea and tukpa there would be an interval of free time. When the gong sounded we would get together again in the courtyard, sitting in our classes, and we would begin the different debates, which would last for an hour. During the midday interval, which lasted about two hours, some classes would remain to debate, even up to twenty-four hours straight and the students in Abhisamayalamkara would have to supervise. At the end of the interval we would reenter the meditation hall to receive the blessings of Hayagriva (the wrathful manifestation of Chenresig), then we would go out to circumambulate the gompa.

In debate, it is much more difficult to respond than it is to question. When I found myself in front of the older monks who were answering, I was shaking and stammering and turned bright red. There were few monks who succeeded in formulating exact responses to the questions of the older monks.

In the second session of debate, the monks would arrange themselves in a circle and someone from the senior class (a candidate for the geshe title) who was skilled in debate would begin and all the others from the lower class would debate with him. When the abbot's cook sounded the gong all the monks would make their way into another courtyard while reciting the Heart Sutra or the Twenty-One Praises to Tara in a very slow rhythm. These were recited nineteen times and they would be followed by praises to the Prajnaparamita; the session would last about three hours and we would also recite the prayers to the dharma protector Dukka, the divinity of the white umbrella. Finally, we would recite the prayer of the lineage masters of the monastery and some particular teaching that we were preparing to receive. Everyone would debate in shifts and the monk in charge of discipline would inspect the courtyard three times before he returned to his room.

The monks of the lharampa class (the highest class) wouldn't recite the evening prayers – during which they would go back to their rooms – but when the debates began they had to return and remain in the courtyard until 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. After 9:00 p.m., a monk from the highest class would arrive and begin chanting in a loud voice, which was then joined by the other classes, and this would last for about ten minutes.

At the end of this session we would join the abbot and the disciplinarian who would be holding lanterns and a little later another monk would serve tea. Then everyone would file back to their rooms, beginning with the lharampa class.

The students in the Abhisamayalamkara and Madhyamika classes would remain in the courtyard all night, finishing their session at the morning tea. Since this course would last about one month, many monks would never take off the belt that held up their shantab (the monk's robe), and when they returned to their rooms they wouldn't go to sleep but continue studying, and if they caught some sleep it would be leaning against a wall while they were meditating, even though they were practically asleep. Then when they awoke they would find their texts in front of them and they would immediately begin studying again.

All of what I have said is a description of the twenty-four hours of the day for those who are pursuing their studies and have not yet achieved the geshe degree. Sometimes, during debate the abbot would give teachings from the Lam Rim (The Stages of the Path), in particular, the Lam Rim Chenmo (the extensive version) by Lama Tsongkhapa. The number of classes would depend on the size of the monastery: in Sera Je, for example, there were fifteen. In the first class one studied the brief Dura (Collected Topics) text, based on logic. In the second class one studied the middling Dura text; and in the third, the extensive Dura. In the fourth class one would study The New Treatises; in the fifth, The Old Treatises; in the sixth, The Selected Treatises; in the seventh, The Treatise on the Ancient Treatise. The eighth class was called the class on the Paramita; the eleventh, New Vinaya; the twelfth, Ancient Vinaya; the thirteenth, Abhidharmakosha; the fourteenth, Karam; and the fifteenth, Laram. The Karam class is for the lower geshe class and the Lharam class is given for the superior geshe class, which has finished its study of the five treatises.



The logic text called the Dura is subdivided into brief, middling, and extensive presentations, which are used for practicing debate. The subject of the Brief Dura is composed of seven points including: the different colors, forms, and shapes. When monks learn the basics of debate they begin by studying the colors – the four primary colors, and the four secondary colors. A complete presentation of the ten levels of concentration includes: four concentrations on the root colors; four concentrations on the four elements; one concentration on singlepointedness; and one on consciousness. The following example is applicable to all the concentrations: If one concentrates on the color yellow, then one puts the color yellow in front of oneself; then, with concentration, one tries to expand that awareness until all of the objects in the universe are yellow. The significance of this complete concentration is that it has the function of being pervasive and gives one the ability to transform all the objects of the universe into the color gold. The purpose for training debate classes in the subject of color is to train in meditation, which is the basis for debate itself. These ten types of concentration are possessed by noble arya beings and by all of the three vehicles, showing that all the schools of Buddhism study and practice this subject.

The fourth of June was the day on which one passed from the first to the second class, from the second to the third, and so forth, except for the parchin class. The main topic of the middling Dura is the relationships and the contradictory aspects of phenomena and the causes and results of their interdependence. The main goal of studying the contradictory aspects of phenomena is to learn to apply the antidotes – recognizing that which has to be abandoned on the path. The contradictory aspects are of various types: negative and positive, affirmative and non-affirmative, those that should be practiced and those that should be abandoned. When we talk about the causes and effects of phenomena we are referring to the causes and effects that are internal and external. With regard to external phenomena, one would say that they would not exist without the causes and conditions that created them, from which one deduces that these phenomena are products of a similar class – that is, a product cannot be of a different class from that which has produced it. For example, a sky flower cannot exist since in the sky there is no seed that would be able to generate it. Given orange seeds, it is not possible to obtain an apple; it is not possible to obtain fruit of a class different from that which produces it. Therefore, we obtain a fruit from a seed that is similar to it. We also find that the same metaphysical law holds true for interior phenomena: from negative actions, negative results are obtained; and from positive actions, positive results are obtained. We can give infinite examples because there are infinite obscurations, and infinite actions, from which we can see infinite results.

In the intermediate class of Dura, in addition to the primary subject, the monks try to study the subject of the superior class as well, which is known as the consequence school: that is, the consequences that are generated through the coming together of causes and conditions. For example: if you put a piece of wood in a fire, it catches fire. To understand with such a simple example is useful for understanding the more profound consequences of subtle phenomena.

In the superior class of logic they go into the above subjects more in depth. They are also given explanations of the way one should study, the qualifications for a good student, the motivation for one's studies, as well as the motivation one should have when one debates. Many people misunderstand the point of debate, believing that it is merely an opportunity to show off one's skills in knowing the subject and in competing in an argument. One has to know that the only motive for studying debate is to test one's personal knowledge of the

subjects and to give one's fellow students an opportunity to improve their understanding. Also, one has the opportunity to observe one's own knowledge. The questions and responses therefore serve as a key for removing doubts.

It is very important that you enter into debate with a good heart, feeling happy and enthusiastic. When you pose a question, you clap your hands very violently, displaying your left hand to your opponent with the palm facing upwards and raising your right hand high above your right shoulder. When you clap your hands, you think of your ten fingers and remember the ten spokes in the wheel of wisdom that realizes the lack of a self of persons that exist inherently or self-sufficiently. The wheel was of fundamental importance in developing the technology of this planet. It is also symbolic of interior development. When you clap the hands and they meet one another, this symbolizes the destruction of attachment to the self of persons and to the concept of the inherent existence of phenomena. When you then hold the left hand out and turn the hand over with the palm facing downwards this symbolizes that when you realize the lack of a self of persons directly, you have definitely closed the door of rebirth into the realms of inferior and superior beings in samsara (cyclic existence). When you turn the hand downwards, you think that you are eliminating the causes for rebirth in samsara for yourself and for all other beings. When the right hand turns upwards, then you think of having reached nirvana, or enlightenment. If your motivation is good then all things can become dharma.

In the upper Dura class they would simultaneously study the mind, mental factors, and the seventy topics of the Abhisamayalamkara. The way in which the Abhisamayalamkara is generally studied is the same as that in which the disciples studied and practiced at the time of the Buddha.

The great Indian pandits Asanga and Nagarjuna, who are called "the two openers of paths," are the founders of two distinct schools of Buddhism. During the times when these two lived there was much misunderstanding of the Buddha's words; it was for this reason that these two thinkers were important in clarifying the Buddha's teachings and eliminating all doubts. Their schools have come to be known as Chittamatra and Madhyamika.

Asanga and Nagarjuna were not contemporaries: Asanga was born around 400 A.D., and Nagarjuna was born about four hundred years later. Together, the schools that these two founded – Asanga, the Chittamatra; and Nagarjuna, the Madhyamika – make up the mahayana path.

Asanga had a brother named Vasubhandu, who was a follower of the hinayana path, and who didn't like Asanga following the mahayana path, which he thought nihilistic. One day while he was composing a text, Vasubhandu said, "The mahayana is like a sky flower, Nagarjuna is like a demon, and my brother is his disciple." At that time Asanga was living in Nalanda monastery and one day he wanted to go to Kashmir, where his brother was living (at that time Kashmir was a place where Buddhism was flourishing). It was Asanga's habit to get up early every morning and recite the text called The Five Treatises on the Levels. One morning, Vasubhandu, who had previously criticized his brother, waited outside of his brother's room, curious to hear the words that his brother was reciting. He understood that the texts Asanga was reciting were very profound and that they could only be understood with a solid foundation of study. Slowly, over time, he came to realize that his criticism of the mahayana view was wrong and that it had been the result of his own bad karma that he had accumulated. This made him sad and repentant, so to purify himself he composed the root text, the Abhidarmakosha, and became a

disciple of his brother and a great proponent of the mahayana.

These are the subjects that were studied in the higher class of Dura.

At the age of sixteen, I studied the brief Dura; at seventeen, the middling presentation; and at eighteen, the extensive presentation. At nineteen, I studied the great treatises.

The subject of the fourth class was how Arya Maitreya succeeded in meditating and attaining realizations. It began with an explanation of the homage to the Buddha, and the Abhisamayalamkara, in which the object of homage was the “Three Mothers” (or perfections of wisdom). These are: omniscience of the consciousness, of the path, and of the base. The omniscience of the base explains the levels of the hearers and solitary realizers (sravakas and pratyekabuddhas); the omniscience of the path shows how bodhisattvas are beneficial to sentient beings and how to meditate; and the omniscience of the consciousness shows how the buddhas turn the wheel of the dharma.

The second section of the fourth class was the general teachings, especially with regard to the non-existence of a self of phenomena and persons. One would study the five types of logic, which included the arguments regarding sunyata (emptiness), followed by a section regarding the three omnisciences, which is explained by means of the base, the method, and the result. The next section covers the four types of nirvana: nirvana with remainder, nirvana without remainder, non-abiding nirvana, and natural nirvana.

Natural nirvana is not truly nirvana, but rather sunyata, or emptiness. Nonabiding nirvana does not exist in cessation, or in samsara. This nirvana belongs to those aryas who obtain the cessation of samsara and who remain in that state of cessation for many eons. The four schools of Buddhism each have their own opinion with respect to their view of nirvana.

In another section of the class they would study the perfect end, which is synonymous with nirvana (generally the term “perfect end” refers to sunyata, but here it has another meaning), and specifically it refers to the signs of the suffering nature of samsara.

Bodhisattvas make a specific promise not to remain in meditative absorption, but to maintain the thought that they will arise and help sentient beings and lead them to liberation and to the pure land of a buddha. When they make an effort to arise it is with this pure dedication. Bodhisattvas make this promise (not to absorb in cessation), before becoming a buddha, before generating the altruistic thought, and also before obtaining the sambhogakaya (enjoyment body) and the nirmanakaya (emanation body) of a buddha. The second promise made by the bodhisattvas is that they will not absorb into the final cessation as long as beings have not attained the five clairvoyances.

This section of studies would then end with the new treatises, after which there would follow the fifth class on the old treatises. When I finished studying the old treatises I was twenty years old. The class on the old treatises began with the scriptures on buddhas and bodhisattvas, which is divided into three sections: that which comes from the teachings of the Buddha, that which follows, and the blessings. The teachings from the Buddha are the Prajnaparamita (Perfection of Wisdom).

One time there was a certain Makeda who killed the king, his own father, to take the crown, but later he felt great remorse, and knowing the Buddha was in the vicinity at the time, he went to speak with him. The Buddha told him that his father and mother were objects to be killed, and that even if he were to kill many brahmins, he would be able to purify it and attain a state of purity. Afterwards, Makeda reflected on the words of the

Buddha, seeing beyond the mere appearance of his words, and realizing that the cause of all suffering is karma and ignorance, and that it was these that needed to be destroyed.

When Makeda meditated on his actions, he experienced the horrible sufferings of the vajra hells. The Buddha said to his disciples: “Because of his actions, Makeda the torments of hell, and if you don’t believe me, try putting a key in the keyhole of his door. The disciples did as Buddha had told them, and, having put the key in the keyhole, found that they were unable to pull it out because it had melted.

According to the teachings of the Buddha, one who despises his parents will experience suffering in that same lifetime, because parents are objects of respect. I would advise you not to despise your parents and to try and put their advice into practice. There could be some cases in which it is better not to do what your parents tell you to, as for example, if they tell you to kill an animal. In that case, it is best to make them understand why it is better to avoid killing.

The order of the blessing is set out in a special way in the Sutra on the Levels and is divided into three parts: (1) the mind blessed by concentration; (2) wisdom; and (3) truth. The mind blessed by concentration refers to the Heart Sutra. The mind blessed by wisdom refers to the fact that, with the power of a buddha, the leaves of the trees move in the wind and the sound that arises is the sound of the dharma. This means that all phenomena that are produced are impermanent; all contaminated phenomena are suffering; all phenomena are empty of being truly existent and independent; and nirvana is peace.

The mind blessed by wisdom truly arises from the voice of Yaka, who is one of the kings of the four directions. The order of the Buddha has four characteristics: through his voice one is able to attain liberation and enlightenment; his teachings are without error or contradiction; and the scope of his teachings and the way that he teaches causes sentient beings to abandon their suffering and attain a state of happiness. The advantage that one derives from listening to the teachings and putting them into practice is that one is able to attain liberation.

Previously, I indicated the way to generate bodhicitta, the altruistic mind. The mind of bodhicitta and the means of generating it are the principal subject of study in the ancient texts. Now I will tell you briefly of these instructions.

There are ten types of instructions in the Abhisamayalamkara, and they are in turn divided into two parts: those regarding the hinayana vehicle, and those regarding the mahayana vehicle. It is good to be specific about what is intended by these instructions: for the mahayana the goal of the teachings is to develop bodhicitta for the attainment of enlightenment, while for the hinayana the teachings are a means for attaining liberation.

#### The First Instructions Regarding the Two Truths: Conventional and Ultimate

In the two vehicles there is a difference between the two truths: according to the Sautrantika school, all permanent phenomena are relative conventional truths, while impermanent phenomena are ultimate truths. Phenomena that are compounded are ultimate truths, while phenomena that are uncompounded are conventional truths. According to the Sautrantika view, the definition of conventional truth is a phenomenon that is not able to perform a function, while the definition of an ultimate truth is a phenomenon that is able to perform a function – e.g.: a cause and an effect. According to the Chittamatra view, emptiness and cessations are ultimate truths, while imputed

phenomena and dependent phenomena are conventional truths. The reason that they believe emptiness and cessations are ultimate truths is the fact that the objects of the meditative equipoise of an arya being are emptiness and cessations. We can also say that these are ultimate truths because they are objects of a pure path. On the other hand, dependent phenomena are not pure objects and not objects of a pure path since they are not the referent objects of the meditative equipoise of an arya – therefore, they are conventional truths.

According to the Chittamatra view, true cessation is the emptiness of the mind: when the mind is contaminated by obscurations it can be purified by practicing on the path and realizing that the mind is empty, which is a true cessation. Also, according to the Chittamatra view, all phenomena that are sunyata (emptiness) are ultimate truths, while everything else is a conventional truth. Also, according to the Prasangika view, all phenomena that are emptinesses are ultimate truths, while all others are conventional truths. For this reason we can say that both the Chittamatra and Prasangika schools say that true cessations are emptiness.

I will give a brief explanation of the Svatantrika-Madhyamika school. It holds that the four noble truths are not ultimate truths, but conventional. The Abhisamayalamkara is written from the Svatantrika point of view. Emptiness is only the object of negation of that which has to be negated. This emptiness can be divided in twenty ways, in sixteen, in twelve, in eight, and in four.

The Svatantrika school holds that the object of negation of emptiness is the wrong perception that sees phenomena existing from their own side. According to this school, all phenomena are established by this wrong conception – that is to say, phenomena are not able to exist without depending on a wrong consciousness. The four emptinesses of the base are: the emptiness of things, non-things, self, and non-self. In this way all phenomena can be classified as being a thing or non-thing, or they can be regarded as a self, or other. These four types of emptiness arise in dependence. The emptiness of things and of non-things depend on one another – in fact, if there is a thing, one cannot say that there isn't and vice versa. Also, the self and others are in dependence: if there is a self, there are others, and if there are others, therefore there is a self.

The twenty emptinesses:

The first is the emptiness of the inner sense organs, followed by the emptiness of external phenomena, which is to say, the objects of the six sense organs and the emptiness of both. The difference between the sense organs (for example, the ear) and the sensation (sound) is that sound is not able to be seen, although we can guess where it arises from. Therefore, the emptiness of both refers to the senses and to the organs since, with respect to sense consciousness, they are external. These senses are not consciousnesses and they cannot exist internally; but neither are they exterior, since they are understood by internal consciousnesses. Therefore, these are the three emptinesses.

The fourth is the emptiness of the absolute.

The fifth is the emptiness of emptiness – since emptiness itself cannot exist from its own side.

The sixth is the great emptiness – the objects of this are the ten directions, and one says that there is not any phenomenon that is not pervaded by this emptiness.

The seventh is the emptiness of existence of the beginning and the end, which

refers to samsara, since samara is without beginning. Great meditators have asserted that samsara has no beginning, and yet it cannot have an end. According to this system, to attempt to find an end to samsara one takes the example of an individual: for example, if Mr. Rossi were to realize the emptiness of self, than for him samsara would cease. The logic of these two statements come from different points of view: the first refers to a general point of view – since sentient beings are infinite in number, one cannot say when samsara will end, therefore one says that samsara is without end. Anyone who directly realizes the emptiness of self cuts off samsara, while those who do not succeed in realizing emptiness are not able to cut it off, and for this reason Aryadeva asserted the above.

The eighth is the emptiness of that which is to be abandoned. This refers to true cessations, since cessations are not an object of abandonment.

The ninth is natural emptiness.

The tenth is the emptiness of characteristics: for example, the characteristic of form, which is what we see with our eyes.

The eleventh is the emptiness of understanding, and refers to the three times: since the past is what has been, the future has yet to arrive, and the present is changing.

The twelfth is the emptiness of compounded phenomena.

The thirteenth is the emptiness of uncompounded phenomena.

The fourteenth is the emptiness non-things.

The fifteenth is the emptiness of the absolute.

If you want to realize emptiness directly, you first need to establish it by means of the five reasonings. To analyze the nature of phenomena one uses the reasoning called “freedom from being many.” To analyze causes one uses the reasoning called the “diamond slivers.” To analyze cause and effect, one uses the reasoning that refutes the existence and the non-existence of phenomena. To analyze effects one uses the reasoning of the four alternatives.

The reasoning of dependent arising is called the “King of Reasonings” and is so called by comparing it to the affairs of state that are discussed by the ministers of a state, while, in the end, the decision is always made by the king. One proof that demonstrates that a watch is not truly existent is that the watch would have to exist by itself, but a watch does not arise from itself, or from others, or from things or non-things. If a watch were to exist in itself, then it would not require causes and conditions, and if causes and conditions and the cause and the effect occurred at the same time then you wouldn’t be able to distinguish what is the cause and what is the effect.

Since conventionally the cause comes before the effect, we can understand that there is not anything that is generated by itself. Independent phenomena are phenomena that do not arise from others; if they were to depend on themselves they would not be able to depend on others – e.g., if a child existed independently, there could not be a mother who existed who gave birth to the child. From a relative point of view, phenomena depend on others, but from an ultimate point of view they do not, because of which it is said that they do not arise from both.

The fact is that phenomena do not exist independently, they do not depend on others, and they do not arise from both.

The fourth reasoning is the “Diamond Slivers,” which holds that phenomena are not able

to arise without causes. The great Nagarjuna examined phenomena with this reasoning in his Fundamental Wisdom, as did Chandrakirti in the sixth chapter of the Madhyamikavatara.

Listening to teachings on emptiness and the various reasonings is very beneficial, and I would recommend that you do so. We need to examine the various systems through the five types of reasonings and then it will be possible to have a direct realization of emptiness. This advice also comes from the experience of Nagarjuna who attained the realization of emptiness using these reasonings. I will finish my explanation of the ten instructions of the mahayana path here.

### The Second Teaching Regarding the Four Noble Truths

These should be practiced with an awareness of the lack of inherent existence. The first two truths are to be abandoned, and the second two truths are to be realized. The first, the truth of suffering, has four aspects: suffering, impermanence, the lack of a self, and all appearances being like illusions. Suffering has a gross aspect and a subtle aspect. The gross aspects are the four types of suffering that all human beings experience, which are: birth, sickness, aging, and death. There are other gross aspects, such as the sufferings experienced by beings that are reborn in lower realms. Also, there is the false happiness that is derived from the worldly pleasures that samsara offers to individuals, and that we often believe are true happiness, but which then turn into suffering.

The subtle aspect of suffering is caused by the circulation of psychic winds in the channels of the subtle body. When they are out of equilibrium it causes a being to have subtle suffering.

All these types of suffering are real, although at times, for normal human beings like us, worldly pleasures can seem like the cause of happiness, while in actual fact they are truly suffering.

Taking as an example the five aggregates, when we speak of these we say that they are the cause of suffering and that they have the nature of suffering, impermanence, emptiness, and lack of a self. We have not understood the true nature possessed by the body; on the contrary, we have four wrong views. Although the true nature of the body is impermanence and suffering, we consider it to be the cause of happiness. Having these distorted conceptions, we cannot realize the true nature of the body: in reality the body is empty. It being the nature of the body that it lacks a self, we consider it to have an inherent nature. Because of this wrong conception we are compelled to commit actions that do not lead us to the right view and we commit many harmful actions that, given time, will result in suffering.

The second noble truth, the true origins of suffering, is also characterized by four aspects: cause, origins, conditions, and strong production. We call it “true origins” because it is that which carries the fruit of suffering, therefore, the true origin is the cause and suffering is the effect. In Tibetan, this second noble truth had also come to be called “the true origin of all.” By “all” we mean any type of action, illusion, or wrong view that causes any type of problem, from the smallest to the largest. This true origin can also be called a condition, which is a synonym, although “condition” possesses its own connotation. The main point is that actions, and what we call illusion, intentions, and wrong concepts, are the causes that bring about states of suffering.

I will give you an example that illustrates this point: a sculptor, in order to make a statue,

needs to have the basic materials such as clay; then the contributing conditions that lead to the artist's depiction are the actions of the artist and the ideas and intentions, which are the concomitant causes.

The fourth aspect is strong production, which is always synonymous with true origins, although this term also has its own specific connotation. Some views, intentions, and negative illusions produce a strong negative result of suffering, and in this sense strong production is synonymous with true origins. The reason therefore that the term "true origins" is applied to these four aspects is to make sure that wrong views are eliminated. Many people believe that the problems they experience are chance and do not have causes. However, it is absurd to think that results do not come from causes of a similar class. Many think that happiness and suffering have a unique cause, or that a cause has innumerable effects, therefore the four characteristics of true origins are very important for eliminating every type of wrong view.

There are six primary mental afflictions and twenty secondary ones. According to people who have great inner experience, the two most serious mental afflictions are hostility and attachment to sensations. In fact, when we experience a pleasurable sensation it is followed by our generating attachment, while when we experience an unpleasant sensation it is followed by our generating aversion. We do not know the true nature of phenomena, therefore, when we experience a sensation of pleasure or displeasure, due to our ignorance, we generate attachment or aversion. From the two principal afflictions the twenty secondary afflictions arise. The third principal mental affliction is pride and the objects that cause it are varied: wealth, beauty, one's abilities, and so forth. Due to the arising of pride we feel superior to others and we look at them with arrogance. Pride is like a ball – when you want to pour water over it, it doesn't stay, it slides off. This metaphor means to say that if a person is full of pride, he is not able to listen or receive advice from others, for which reason we say that the proud are full of themselves.

Doubt is the fourth mental affliction and is the principal obstacle for reaching any goal that you set yourself, which applies not only to the practice of dharma, but to all things that you want to do. With doubt you cannot realize any of your goals.

The fifth mental affliction is wrong view, which is the biggest obstacle for reaching nirvana and enlightenment. Because of wrong view many people are not able to attain liberation.

The sixth mental affliction is ignorance – the obscured portion of the mind. We can also say that it is the portion that we do not know. Usually we think of karma as something philosophical, but on the contrary, it is a thing to which we are all subject. Every action of body, speech, and mind is completed in a fraction of a second, and will lead to a karmic result. If, in the space of a minute, we complete five positive actions and five negative ones, these will lead to the fruition of five positive results and five negative results. The cause of happiness in life is positive karma, while the cause of suffering is negative karma. This is only the gross aspect of karma. If a person wants to have money, he will not be able to obtain it if he doesn't work; but if he finds work, then he will obtain money – this is the law of karma.

The third noble truth is that of true paths, and this refers to the path of seeing. Whether you are on the hinayana or mahayana path, there are five levels. The true paths are the final three: the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of no-more-learning.

The path of no-more-learning is that in which one possesses definite wisdom – the total



elimination of all obscurations and the purification of all afflictions, which is synonymous with the attainment of liberation. Whoever has purified every type of obscuration and illusion no longer has need of instructions. Tibetans call this completely purified mind without obscurations the supreme mind. By eliminating the two types of obscurations one attains the omniscient mind and this omniscient supreme mind is the true path.

The fourth noble truth is the true cessation of suffering. By true cessations, we are here referring to the mind that is purified of the obscurations of distorted concepts and of the obstructions to omniscience. There are many types of refuge, but the ultimate refuge is true paths and true cessations. It is not anything external, but something that dwells in our own minds. The ultimate refuge is therefore the attainment of this true cessation in one's own mind. Using an analogy: true suffering is like tuberculosis or cancer, and the true origin of suffering is like the causes that have lead to the illness. The true path leading to the cessation of suffering is like the appropriate medicine, and the true cessation is the positive result of being cured. We could also say that we are suffering from a disease of the mind, and that in order to cure ourselves we need to rely on the Buddha as our teacher, which is the true medicine for our mental obscurations. Also, in this analogy, the dharma community is like the assistant and samsara is like a huge hospital. Listening to the Buddhist teachings or reading many intellectual books is good, but the most important thing is to put what we have learned and read into practice. Only through practice can we avoid letting the teachings remain a mental abstractions.

#### The Third Teaching Regarding the Three Jewels

When we take refuge in the Three Jewels we need to be free from the distorted conception that believes we are permanent and independent – on the contrary, we need to remember that we are impermanent and dependent.

#### The Fourth Teaching on Joyous Effort

We need to not be attracted to negative actions, but to make an effort towards virtuous actions that are the cause of virtue. Joyous effort counteracts laziness and indolence. Through persevering and working hard at the practice of dharma we will be able to overcome our problems.

#### The Fifth Teaching

#### The Sixth Teaching Regarding the Path

We have to be able to discriminate between the various paths...

#### The Seventh Teaching Regarding the Five Divine Eyes

#### The Eighth Teaching Regarding the Six Clairvoyances

#### The Ninth Teaching Regarding the Path of Seeing

#### The Tenth Teaching Regarding the Path of Meditation

These are the ten teachings of the mahayana. The other text that I had to study was on the Jor Lam, which deals with the path of preparation and has a detailed description of the buddha nature. The final text that one studies is called The Great Bhumis and the Great Signs, which explains in a vast and detailed way the ten mahayana bhumis. I was twenty years old when I studied this text.

I also remember that when I was sixteen, I received teaching on the Lam Rim from Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche. There are different lineages of the Lam Rim teachings. One of them

began with the Fifth Dalai Lama, another began with the Panchen Lama Chokyi Gyaltsen, and another began with the Panchen Lama Losang Yeshe. I also received teachings on mind training. Also, every year I would receive initiations from the Dalai Lama, in particular the Chenresig initiation (the Buddha of Compassion). When I was nineteen, I had a class that studied the new treatises, and in this class every other night we had to debate all night, in spite of the fact that it was winter and it was very cold in the courtyard.

In the summer there were other problems because of the rain. We had to stay outside in a sort of veranda, where it was always a little cold. For the monks with strong will, they saw the fact of having to debate in the cold as the cause of receiving great merit. At the end of the course there was a debate exam that took place in front of the abbot and the disciplinarian who oversaw the examination on the memorization of the texts. Finally, there was an exam in front of the entire assembly of monks in which you would have to respond to the questions of everyone. From that course, they chose sixteen students and, in the grand assembly hall, two monks were placed in the center to debate on a specific subject. They were dressed in the traditional clothes and one of the two had on a yellow hat. The clothes worn by the monks have precise symbolic meanings. For example, on the peak of the hat there are many threads, which remind one that there are thousands of buddhas. These threads are held by a small white cord that symbolizes bodhicitta. The line that goes around the circumference of the hat represents the confines of the pure land of the Buddha. The inside of the hat has three colors: red, white, and blue. The blue symbolizes the power of Vajrapani; the white symbolizes Chenresig; and the red symbolizes Manjushri. Inside the hat there is always a buttonhole from which hang three blue threads symbolizing the three baskets (or sets) of teachings given by the Buddha. When a monk puts on his hat he should remember all these things.

One great master called Dukkar Rinpoche was truly a perfect monk. Having no possessions, one time when he wanted to make offerings he took off his hat and put it on a rock. Then he filled his bowl with water and offered it to the hat.

The thangka and shirt of a monk are very easy to take off. This symbolizes that it is possible to liberate oneself from the Lord of Death. When a monk puts it on, he should recall impermanence and death and feel it his duty to practice the dharma. The only thing that can help us when we die is the results of our actions; all the rest – our parents, friends, and possessions – will definitely have to be abandoned. The last meal at the moment of death will be medicine or pills of nectar. During the process of dying one experiences signs that are the results of one's accumulated negative karma, such as the appearance of spirits or frightening visions, or the sensation of sinking, as if one were falling down a cliff. One may also experience sensations of heat or cold. On the other hand, if one has accumulated a lot of merit from positive actions, during death one will have sensations such as the experience of flying in space or seeing radiant light. These are the exterior appearances.

At the moment of death no one is able to help us, nor harm us, but only our actions will guide us toward our future life according to the negative or positive imprints we have accumulated.

When a monk puts on his thangka he has to recall that life is brief and the only condition for a better rebirth is his virtuous practice of the dharma. The small blue borders on the sleeves of the thangka remind the monks of one of the early kings in Tibet, Langdharma, who harmed and killed many monks. Many other monks fled to China during that time. In Tibet there remained only four monks, and when things calmed down some novices

wanted to become monks but, because it is necessary for there to be five fully ordained monks in order to complete the ordination of new monks, a Chinese monk came to Tibet to assist. The blue border of the thangka recalls the generosity of this Chinese monk.

When I was twenty-one, I took a course that taught mainly the texts of Lama Tsongkhapa called *The Essence of the Excellent Teachings*. The first part was general but the main body dealt with the wrong conceptions held by beings – that is, the belief that existence is inherent, which is the main cause for remaining imprisoned in cyclic existence. Because we possess this conception of a self, we remain involved in samsara, and from it we develop the sense of possession and we say “mine.” This leads us to develop strong attachment for ourselves, and aversion towards others, which in turn leads us to perform actions that create problems for us. Not understanding this state of aversion and attachment, one experiences infinite problems, without understanding their origin. If, instead, one understands these things, they will know the three doors of liberation that understand emptiness. If one observes a flower just with the visual sense organ, it is not possible to realize the emptiness of it, or its lack of a self, which one is only able to understand through analytical investigation and logic, using the hundreds of logical methods. For example: a rosary does not exist inherently or independently – in other words, it does not have its own nature. The causes and effects of a rosary are not inherently existent. The rosary does not have its own existence because it exists interdependently. If a person asks for example: “Where is Cesare?” one could speculate in this way: “Perhaps Cesare is in his head? In his arm? In his stomach? In his big toe, or in his mind?” If we look hard for this entity called Cesare, we are unable to find it. We can say that the eyes belong to Cesare, but the eyes are not Cesare. Where is Cesare? When he began to form in his mother’s womb, is it possible that he was born in that moment? Or perhaps he was born separately from his body? Is he large or small? If Cesare is large, how did he come to be in his mother’s womb?

Reasoning in this way about the entity called Cesare, one will not be able to find him. In fact, Cesare is only a name that is imputed on the basis of the five aggregates. In this way, when we see Cesare we can understand that he exists on the basis of imputing him on his five aggregates, but he doesn’t have an inherent existence.

In the teachings of mahamudra, the Dalai Lama explained the way of analyzing the self, after which it is possible to realize emptiness. If one listens to the teachings on emptiness and then analyzes them, this will lead to results. The realization of sunyata is the best protection against any type of obstacle or interference; even if one does not realize it directly, the fact of meditating on it is a great protection against the obstacles that we experience.

Monks have many vows to observe; if they break them, meditating on sunyata can purify them. The period when we sleep can be used to accumulate merit. Even if one is not able to analyze logically that there is an absence of inherent existence, one should try to analyze oneself and see that one does not exist independently and inherently. Then, with this knowledge, one can accumulate merit during one’s sleep. Buddha himself said to his disciples: “You should not consider me your teacher, but take and examine my teachings, like a goldsmith examines a nugget to determine whether it is gold. Then if you don’t find errors or falsity in what I tell you, you will be able to have faith in what I teach.”

When one buys gold, one can analyze it in three ways. The first way is to melt it and examine its color. The second is to cut off a piece of it to make sure that it is not mixed with other metals. The third is to rub it with special cotton and then examine the color

that appears because of the chemical reaction, which tells whether it is gold or not. Likewise, there are three ways of analyzing to ascertain whether the teachings of the Buddha are correct. The first is analogous to the first method of examining gold: one examines the teachings by listening and reflecting. One does not have to examine too much to ascertain that a table is made of wood – one just has to look at it – but this does not prove that it is lacking independent inherent existence, and that it exists in an interdependent way. Being a product, the table is an impermanent phenomenon. If a person is not able to understand a Buddhist teaching directly or by conceptual analysis then there is another secret way that one will be able to understand the essence of the Dharma. For example, if one practices generosity one will obtain wealth. The first method then is through analysis. The second is through direct understanding. If, for example, while reading the Heart Sutra one does not find contradictions, one can then rely on the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha made a very precise assertion, saying that one should not rely on the appearance of a teacher, but on the teachings that they give. Also, if you receive a teaching from a teacher who is very famous, you don't need to believe blindly in what they say, but it is important to analyze it. Whether the teachings are given by a great lama or a poor monk, it is important to analyze what one hears and if it is correct to put it into practice. We don't have to have the attitude of only following what the great lamas say and not listen to what is said by simple monks; in both cases we need to examine the advice. To practice dharma one needs more than a proper sitting position: we need to practice when we walk, work, eat, sleep, etc. Every activity can be transformed into the practice of dharma. For example, we can think of nourishing all of the tiny microbes in our bodies when we eat, and then think of bringing all of these beings to liberation, to the extent that we are able. Or, when we are walking in the mountains or in a park, we can think as we breathe in that the fresh air that we are breathing is for these tiny beings in our bodies. Anything that you can think of to transform your actions into altruistic ones will lead to the accumulation of merit.

It is important not just to memorize the verses of the texts, but also to look and reflect on their meaning. When our parents scold us we feel regret but when we reflect on the reason they did it we understand that it was for our benefit. We need to orient ourselves to thinking about ultimate truth rather than basing our lives on the conventional truths that are mere appearances. Buddha taught his disciples how to analyze through the four dependent characteristics that are part of the view of the Chittamatra school. According to the Chittamatra school, there are three natures of phenomena: produced phenomena, imputed phenomena, and thoroughly established phenomena.

For example, in front of me there is an alarm clock that possesses three characteristics: it has a name, therefore it is an imputed phenomenon; since it is produced from parts, it is also a produced phenomenon; finally, the emptiness of the clock is a thoroughly established phenomenon.

The object that is imputed by name is something that we can see. The object that arises through cause and effect is a produced phenomenon. The object of the consciousness of an arya (one who has realized emptiness) is a thoroughly established phenomenon. For the Chittamatrins, phenomena do not arise through the agglomeration of atoms, but through the power of the mind. Every one of us has a different perception with regard to an object that is observed – in this case, the alarm clock. Since everyone has their own perception with respect to the alarm clock, if we had twenty people in a room they would have twenty different perceptions of the clock. I have my own view of the clock that belongs only to me; Cesare's view belongs only to him, and so forth. This is the view held

by the Chittamatrins. According to the four ancient schools of Buddhist thought, these are the assertions that they make.

Buddha turned the wheel of dharma three times. The first turning taught the four noble truths, which includes the sixteen aspects. There are thirty-seven aspects of the omniscient mind, and the fifty-three mental defects. The first are the five aggregates: form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness. The aggregate of form has five divisions, or sources: arising from form, sound, smell, touch, and taste. The Vaibashika and Prasangika schools assert that there are objects of form not included in this source, for example, the revelatory form of the vows taken by monks and lay people. After these five divisions of form there are the six mental cognizers, the six contacts, the six feelings, the six sense organs, the twelve arisings and the four types of food (the food of form, of contact, of meditation, of vigilance, and of the imagination). This last category means to say that only through the vision of food can we be satisfied.

With the practice of meditation it is possible to sustain yourself without gross food. The food of contact is used by these beings to nourish themselves with odors, like the spirits or those who dwell in the bardo. The food of form is that which we eat every day.

Together with these divisions that are derived from the five aggregates of the base, we also include the twelve links of dependent origination. The first link is ignorance, from which we generate various actions, which are then the principal cause for creating karma. Karma is of three types: positive, negative, and neutral – which does not have a definite result. If, for example, someone has stable shamata meditation – without a precise motivation – and they are absorbed in this state, at the moment of death one could attain a rebirth in the upper realms. In fact, one can say that if you want to be born in the upper realms, one can attain that through shamata meditation. It is possible, then, through the appropriate causes, to be reborn in the form realm, the formless realm, or the desire realm (which includes our planet and the deva realm).

Practicing without a motivation of renunciation, it is possible to be reborn in the desire realm, but if one's practice is accompanied by renunciation it is possible then to achieve liberation. Even with a small motivation of renunciation, such as renouncing some of your own pleasure to feed the small birds that work so hard to find food, it is possible that this could act as a cause for liberation. Everything depends on the motivation.

The second type of karma is negative – for example: speaking badly of another person, one creates a seed that is deposited in the consciousness. This type of positive or negative karma is generated spontaneously. The fifth link of dependent origination is name and form. The sixth is consciousness. The seventh is contact. In order for contact to occur three conditions are necessary: the object, the sense organ, and the mind that perceives a visual consciousness. The same can be said of the other objects of sense consciousness, such as sound, odor, tactile objects, and tastes. After contact occurs through these three conditions, feeling arises, which is the eighth link. Feeling can be pleasant or unpleasant, depending on whether the contact is joy or suffering; or it can be neutral if the object is indifferent. If the food we eat is good, the feeling we will have will be pleasant and we will generate the desire not to be separated from the object that gives us joy: then we generate desire, which is the ninth link. On the other hand, when we have contact with an unpleasant object, we have unpleasant feelings and we generate the desire to be separated from it. According to the Vaibashika view, in every object the eight elements are present. For example, take a bell: in it there are the eight elements, yet they are not in contact with one another. Of these, the first four are the elements: earth, water, air, and fire; then

there are the elements: form, taste, vision, and hearing. In the Sautrantika school it is asserted that these elements are in contact with one another.

Between the Chittamatrins and the Vaibashikas there is the following debate: if one were to put water into a kapala (skull cup) it would disperse – since the elements do not come together, the kapala would not be able to contain the water. The Vaibashikas hold that the water does not go through kapala since the energy of the water element that dwells within the eight elements impedes the water from being able to go through.

The Chittamatrins pose another question to the Vaibashikas: “When a drum sounds, does the drumstick touch the skin of the drum?” The Vaibashikas hold that the contact does not occur. The Chittamatrins ask further: “But then where does the sound arise from?” The Vaibashikas answer that the sound is produced in the space between the drumstick and the skin of the drum.

Another question that the Chittamatrins pose to the Vaibashikas is: “When one walks, do the feet touch the ground?” The Chittamatrins assert that, if molecular particles are partless, then they would never be able to unite to constitute an object. If there are six particles of which there are two at the center and four in the four directions, do the particles in the center possess the four directions? If the particles at the center do not possess them, then these two central particles would have to touch. But if these particles are not touching, then it follows that they have a north side, a south side, an east side, and a west side. It once again follows that they are not partless, but do in fact possess parts. If the six particles were partless then they would form a unified object.

According to the Chittamatra school, the particles are not lacking in parts, since if they were partless, then produced phenomena would also have to be partless. They assert that all atomic parts – even the most subtle molecular particles – have parts. According to the Chittamatra school, the basis of this view is in conventional, or relative, truth and in ultimate truth, which have to be understood through a presentation of method and wisdom. The fruit of this understanding is the four bodies of a buddha: the sambhogakaya, the nirmanakaya, the dharmakaya, and the rupakaya.

The presentation of the path includes an exposition of method and wisdom, which are subdivided into five parts (five for the path of method and five for the path of wisdom). These are the paths of: accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation, and no-more-learning. In the mahayana path bodhicitta acts as the method, while the realization of the lack of an inherent self acts as the effect of wisdom.

To attain the state of a buddha, a being has to accumulate a great quantity of merit and this accumulation is made over the time of three eons (very many centuries). In the first eon one acquires the merit to attain the path of accumulation and preparation. In the second eon, one accumulates the merit to dwell on the first seven bhumis. In the third eon, one accumulates the merit needed to enter and dwell on the eighth through the tenth bhumis.

We should understand that when we talk about accumulation we are referring to entering a path and obtaining great quantities of merit. When we talk of a true path of accumulation we are referring to the direct perception of the dharma and also to listening, reflecting, and meditating on innumerable texts and teachings. You know that you have reached this level when you have generated pure renunciation. Renunciation is not something artificial, but something that occurs spontaneously – similar to the feeling of desire that we generate for things. The path of accumulation is divided into three parts:

inferior, middling, and superior. It is taught that some bodhisattvas on the inferior path, due to discouragement, fall into the hinayana path. This discouragement arises from uncertainties about the practice of generosity and one's ability to be of benefit to others. For example, there are instances of persons who take the monk's vows and then later give them back.

To attain the middling path of accumulation means that one has the realization of the mind that is like gold. If an object is made of gold, that is its nature. If you were to break it up into pieces, the nature of the gold does not change.

To attain the superior path of accumulation means that one's meditation on the dharma is continuous and one has the capacity to listen to many teachings simultaneously that are being given in different places, and that one has attained great happiness. This bodhisattva listens to teachings directly from the buddhas through his great meditative ability. It might be compared to the ability of a television, which through the power of electricity, is able to receive a telecast of a football match from the other side of the planet. In any case, the power of meditation is much more powerful than electrical energy.

After the superior path of accumulation, one enters the path of preparation, which is divided into four levels: heat, peak, patience, and supreme dharma. It is said that when one realizes the heat level one attains the special view that is the wisdom of meditation. Heat has two divisions: the wisdom of equilibrium, and the resultant wisdom. In these stages the meditator realizes that all phenomena appear like dreams, and don't have inherent or independent existence. One attains the special qualities that liberate one from the knowledge obscurations that are generally of two types: those that impede knowledge due to mental defects, and those that impede liberation. Then, at the peak level, one is liberated from the obscurations that impede the realization of emptiness. At the peak level one no longer generates distorted views and one accumulates infinite merit. At the patience level, the causes of rebirth in the lower realms are completely eliminated and one can trust that they will never be reborn there. At this stage one obtains a particular realization that allows one to perceive substances. The final stage of the path of preparation is the supreme dharma – so-called because within the universe it is truly supreme.

One then attains the special understanding and realization of the referent object, which is imputed and empty of having its own existence. What then happens at this stage is that the meditator completely eliminates the wrong concept that imputed things exist inherently.

After this level, one attains meditative equilibrium and then enters the path of seeing. At this level one attains the special ability to eliminate the perception of imaginary phenomena. If, for example, I were to ask, "Is this watch real?" and someone responded that it is, and that it truly exists from its own side, this would be an example of an imaginary phenomenon.

After the path of seeing one attains the path of meditation, which is divided into ten stages. On the path of accumulation one has a realization of emptiness through a meaning generality, while in the path of seeing one has a direct realization. On the path of preparation one has a direct understanding of the meaning generality, while on the path of seeing one has a direct understanding of the truth. In the path of meditation one has an understanding of the resultant factors and then one attains enlightenment.

After all of these studies, we completed the study of the selected new treatises. The group

from my class had formed a sort of small monastery within the monastery, in which we had our own abbot and a disciplinarian, as well as forming our own debate group. During the day there were four sections of study and then there was debate. The subject of this course was The Essence of the Explanations of Truth and the Way to Determine It, a course composed of one hundred twenty pages that we had to memorize. It is said that if you recite this text one hundred times you will realize sunyata, but I didn't have this opportunity because I only managed to memorize sixty pages. I always thought, however, that it greatly helped me to have a certain understanding of phenomena. I also read six commentaries on this text, and I was very proud that, thanks to these commentaries, I had better understood the text, even though this pride later harmed me because I forgot the sixty pages that I had memorized.

There was an homage to Manjushri composed in the ancient monastery of Nalanda. One time when all the monks were in assembly, the abbot requested that the monks compose an homage to Manjushri; there were five hundred monks and four hundred and ninety-nine of them composed the homage, while only one of them wrote a long commentary on it. This homage is very important and contains many blessings since the four hundred and ninety-nine monks who composed it all wrote identical homages, which is truly incredible!

At the age of twenty-two I took a course on the old treatises, which covered four texts. The first was on the meditations that cause rebirth in the form and formless realms

– in particular, these texts gave a lot of information on the development of shine, shamata, vipassana, the concentrations, calm abiding, and profound view. The second covered the twenty types of sangha, although in reality, if one had to count, the types of sangha would be innumerable. There are four enterers and four fruits, or results: one who is a stream-enterer; one who is a stream-abider; one who is a stream-enterer and returner, and one who is a non-returner ("returning" refers to returning to the desire realm). The second text covers dependent origination and the various opinions of masters on this subject. For some Vaibashikas there is temporary interdependence. Of the first five afflicted aggregates the first is ignorance and the second is the collection of factors that determine karma. There is another school that asserts there is instantaneous interdependence. That is to say, in a brief moment of time all of the twelve links are realized. There is also relative interdependent origination and interdependent origination on the basis of the view of the Lam Rim.

The fourth subject is the basis of mind according to the Chittamatra (Mind Only) school, which has two divisions: nan-rimpa (true aspect), and nan-zumpa (deceptive aspect). For true aspect Chittamatrins there are six types of consciousness: visual, olfactory, tactile, taste, auditory, and mental. The seventh is called the storehouse consciousness, and the eighth is called the afflicted mental consciousness.

The storehouse consciousness is where the latencies of karmic potentials reside. These potentials have been created by our virtuous and non-virtuous actions. The storehouse consciousness, whether one realizes it or not, can be called a mind lacking in attention, which means that rather than being able to observe and feel things, they are not remembered. The mental factors that accompany this mind are called "omnipresent". They are: feeling, discrimination, consciousness, attention, and mental function. For the Chittamatrins, this storehouse consciousness exists and they present eight reasons proving it. One of these reasons states that the storehouse consciousness exists because when a being dies, they necessarily have to be reborn. Some say that in addition to the



eight mental consciousnesses there is a ninth called the “uncontaminated consciousness.” Others assert that there is only one mental consciousness, which is a non-Buddhist view. They hold that a person is like a house with six windows; having only one mental consciousness that is used by the six sense organs. Thereby the mental consciousness carries out the function of seeing, hearing, feeling, etc.

At the age of twenty-three I studied the subject of the perfections. I had previously studied the first chapter of the Abhisamayalamkara, and I now had the opportunity to study the remaining chapters. The next subject, of the second chapter, was the path consciousness. The third was the knowledge of the base that treats the union of the complementary aspects; the fourth was The Union of the Peak; the fifth was called The Union of the Boundaries. If I wanted to speak about all this in detail it would take at least five years. After this course, we reunited in assembly to spend some time on Madhyamika and a monk called “the holder of joyous discipline” had the duty of maintaining tight discipline, but also of telling jokes.

This monk received many donations and if he received some women's clothing he had to put it on and pretend to be a woman, doing things that people requested. Sometimes he would wear a hat that had a hook on top of it and act the part of a jester, making fun of people's funny characteristics. This was an occasion of great enjoyment for everyone. After this, the students in this course were given permission to visit the Dalai Lama. On this occasion, the holder of joyous discipline dressed up in elegant clothes, a false beard and moustaches, and wore a hat with a hole in it. When we all returned to the monastery he came back first and standing in front of the main entrance of the monastery he told those who had remained behind about the beauty of nature, the clouds, the stars, the sky, the mountains, etc. He then said that His Holiness the Dalai Lama complimented him, telling him that he was really a person of good heart and asking him what he wanted of life and what position he hoped to attain. The response of the jester was: "I would like to have something to put on the top of my hat because this would provide me with food and drink." At that point the Dalai Lama gave him a potato to put in his hat. Actually, the jester was lying because he had not gone to see the Dalai Lama.

In the course on the perfections I studied the two philosophical systems – the Chittamatra and the Madhyamika. The text on the perfections has the explicit subject of emptiness, while its implicit subject is the stages of the path. It emphasizes emptiness and the Chittamatra and Madhyamika view of the merit of the perfections. They both refer to the eight things and the seventy subsidiary topics. The principal thing that distinguishes these schools is the mind that forms the basis of the law of cause and effect. Speaking of Buddhist systems in general, most accept the six types of consciousness, while the Chittamatra school presents eight: the seventh being the mind-basis-of-all, and the eighth being the afflicted mental consciousness. The seventh, the mind-basis-of-all, is a neutral mind, neither positive nor negative, and it is also said to be a non-afflicted consciousness. There are seven ways of knowing and, of these, there are five omnipresent minds that form the basis of all phenomena. The feeling of the mind-basis-of-all is a neutral feeling. To prove that the mind-basis-of-all exists there are two reasonings: one that is based on texts, and one that is based on logic.

To know the mind-basis-of-all the Buddha taught two texts: The Joy of All the Sutras and another sutra called the Dode-Conder. This last text was part of the Buddha's third turning of the wheel of dharma. The verse that shows the mind-basis-of-all is:

The mind-basis-of-all is subtle and vast And is the basis of all imprints. Thinking that this mind-basis-of-all Possesses a self is a wrong view. I don't speak to those who have such a wrong view.

The Chittamatrins think that the words of the Buddha are in no need of interpretation. There are eight types of logical analysis and each of these has two parts: a correct sign and a consequence. If you want to prove the mind-basis-of-all – taking Cesare as an example – one can say that he has a mind-basis-of-all because he has taken rebirth. The second sign is that Cesare has a beginning. The third is that there exists a clear mind, and one that is not clear. The fourth is that we possess the six types of karma. The fifth is that we have a memory. The sixth is that there are two types of absorption: one of non-discrimination, and one of cessation. The seventh is that we possess positive and negative feelings. The eighth is the process of death and the transfer of consciousness afterwards. Before the gross and subtle death we experience the six consciousnesses and even during deep sleep they carry out their functions. When one faints, and cannot account for what has happened, the six consciousnesses do not carry out their functions; however, the

mind-basis-of-all remains present.

The mind-basis-of-all carries out its function so that positive, negative, and neutral feelings can manifest. Thus, it must be a mind that doesn't change; otherwise the imprints of the feelings could not abide there. The mental consciousness cannot be the one that possesses the imprints of the various feelings because it is only the mind-basis-of-all that retains the impressions of the actions and feelings of the individual. When a bodhisattva attains the eighth bhumi he no longer has a mind-basis-of-all, but the mental consciousness has completely matured. When a bodhisattva attains the state of a buddha he has completely developed the mind-basis-of-all, which is then called the mirror-like wisdom consciousness.

The eighth type of afflicted mind is that which clings to the "I" – the self of persons, and the self of phenomena. The Chittamatra school presents logical proofs to demonstrate the existence of the afflicted mind.

One logical reason that proves the existence of the afflicted mental consciousness is the existence of extraordinary conditions for the mental consciousness. Another reason is the existence of non-recognition and the two states of absorption, from discrimination to non-recognition, pacification and non-pacification. Another reason is that generally one says: "This is my house, my land, my car, etc." Yet another reason is that in the mental continuum we have attachment to ourselves as an "I".

Every virtuous action is preceded by a motivation: therefore the Chittamatra school presents these eight types of logic. They believe in the existence of the mindbasis-of-all, but not in the existence of external phenomena.

In brief, all persons have these eight consciousnesses.

When we reach the eighth bhumi, the mind-basis-of-all changes and becomes a completely mature consciousness. The afflicted mental consciousness changes as well. When a bodhisattva attains the state of a buddha, he realizes the wisdom of equanimity. The Chittmatrins think that when a being attains the state of a buddha, all the types of mental afflictions change into different mental states. The reverse is true for the Madhyamikas, who do not share Chittamatra view. Lama Tsongkhapa composed an extensive commentary on the mind-basis-of-all on which I have briefly reported here.

Until the age of twenty-two, I studied texts on the principal points of debate according to the Madhyamika view. At the age of twenty-three I began to study the texts of Madhyamika. Before the Madhyamika course began, in accordance with the Tibetan calendar starting around the tenth of October, there were preparatory exams and debates to be taken. During this period there was a festival and many pujas and prayers in the gompas, which, out of auspiciousness, was called the Madhyamika gompa. All of this took place in order for our studies to go well.

## Final Part

The subject of the fifth course on the old treatises was the four noble truths, which was the first subject of debate. The second part was on the non-characteristics, and the third part was on perfect discrimination. The four noble truths were taught in accordance with the lower Buddhist schools, known as the hinayana. The second subject, signlessness, was taught in accordance with the Madhyamika school. The third subject, perfect discrimination, was taught in accordance with the Chittamatra view. All of these teachings are contained in a collection called The Three Baskets or precepts that are based on the words of the Buddha, and of the many Indian pandits who composed numerous commentaries.

### The Five Teachings of Arya Maitreya

The “excellent doctrine” is so-called because it is capable of protecting one from suffering and is able to eliminate every illusion and mental defect. The principle subject we debated was the treatises of Arya Maitreya was the reason for which it is important to practice the dharma. The reason that the Buddha’s teachings are said to be perfect is that they possess the four characteristics: subject, purpose, the aim of the purpose, and relationship. For example, to verify someone’s words and to certify their excellence, one needs to observe whether they possess the four characteristics. After having studied these scriptures I studied the Perfection of Wisdom. The first part is a treatise on wisdom, the second is on the path of wisdom, the third is on the perfect result, and the fourth is on the perfect nature.

The first treatise covers all the scriptures of the Prajnaparamita. The example of the perfection of the path is all the good qualities in the continuum of a bodhisattva. The perfection of the result is the state of supreme omniscience. The perfect nature is sunyata (emptiness). The perfection of the real and the ultimate is the perfection of the result, while the other three are the perfections that are imputed.

The third subject of this fifth course was bodhicitta, which means having the desire to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all other beings. This bodhicitta is divided into twenty-two aspects that occur in sequence of generation, although in general they have two aspects: the bodhicitta of aspiration, and the bodhicitta of action. The difference is that the first, aspirational bodhicitta, is that which one practices before having realized the six perfections, while the second is that which one practices after having these realizations. There are three ways to realize bodhicitta. The first is explained using the example of a king, the second using the example of an oarsman, and the third using the example of a shepherd.

The king-like bodhicitta means having the desire to attain enlightenment in order that all other beings attain the same state. The oarsman-like bodhicitta is the desire to attain enlightenment at the same time as all other sentient beings. The shepherd-like bodhicitta is the desire that all other beings attain enlightenment before oneself, just like a shepherd makes sure that all the sheep enter the fold before he does.

These three ways of generating bodhicitta are beyond all expression, however there are two other extraordinary ways to develop bodhicitta: one comes from Manjushri, and the other from Maitreya.

The method that comes from Arya Maitreya is called the method of the six causes and one effect: the first six are the causes of the final resultant effect. The first cause is

equanimity and the way to meditate on this is to visualize three persons in front oneself: a friend, an enemy, and a stranger. Observe the feelings that arise when you think about these three persons: the affection that you feel for a friend, the aversion you feel towards an enemy, and the indifferent feelings that you have towards a stranger. Analyzing well, you can understand the feelings of affection that arise towards your friend – in this life they have been helpful and made you happy. Similarly, one feels aversion towards the enemy because that person has done us harm. And finally, the stranger has done nothing positive or negative towards us. Then, so as not to generate too much attachment for your friend, you should meditate that in the future that person might harm you, and in past lives that person may have harmed you. Even if two friends get along very well, in the future their friendship may deteriorate. An example that is very obvious is the relationships between nations, parties, and social groups, as well as relationships between persons in a community. The same thing can be said when we meditate on our enemy. In the past and future that person may be a friend. Therefore, we can conclude that, in fact, these three persons are not different as we thought they were.

From the point of view of the dharma, our enemy is the most precious person; he is our greatest teacher of patience. This is a very powerful way to practice. If someone bothers us, this is the best thing for developing the mind of patience. I myself have debated on the subject of the need to practice patience. It is said that all sentient beings, without exception, have been very kind to us. If someone doubts this, the answer in a debate would be something like: “Through this being I was able to practice patience, generate bodhicitta, and attain enlightenment.” If we reflect, for example, on a sheep that gives us wool, milk, and its skin, we can understand how kind it is to us.

After having generated equanimity towards the three types of person, we can reflect that they have been very kind to us, and that they have been our mother in the past, and will be so again in the future.

After reflecting on the fact that all beings have been our mother, we go on to reflect on the loving attitude, which is like the behavior of a mother bird towards its young. In this way, we can understand how kind we should be with one another. Therefore, a very important subject to keep in mind when we meditate is the consideration and understanding that all beings have been kind to us in the same way that our actual mother has been kind to us.

It is impossible to count the number of times that these beings have been our mothers: we cannot make an exact estimate. We need to think of the kindness that they have had for us and then it is necessary to generate the thought that we want to repay that kindness through the practice of dharma. All beings without exception want to be happy and to be liberated from suffering, but they do not know what true happiness is, or the way to attain it. They do not even know what suffering is. All these mother sentient beings do not even possess a bit of happiness that isn't contaminated. Thinking of this, one comes to understand that the reason for practicing the dharma is to give love to all beings. Summarizing then: the first cause of bodhicitta is recognizing that all beings have been our mother. The second is recognizing their kindness. The third is having the desire to repay that kindness. The fourth is to generate love for those beings. There are two types of love: the first is the desire that all beings possess happiness, and the second is the ordinary love that arises from attraction. This arises when we see a loved person that we recognize – for example, when a father sees his son and says: “How good looking, how wonderful!” The fifth cause is compassion – that is, the desire that all beings be liberated from suffering. The sixth is the extraordinary attitude that takes responsibility for

liberating all beings. Right now, we do not have the ability to liberate beings – but who possesses this ability? Only the buddhas are able to help others effectively.

The seventh point is the resultant effect – bodhicitta. The person who understands this will make effort to attain the state of a buddha. But first, in order to attain this, it is necessary to develop bodhicitta. Meditating on this seventh point, it is possible to attain bodhicitta and to be of help to sentient beings, which is why it is recommended that we meditate on this point as much as possible.

When I debated on bodhicitta in the fifth course, I meditated in an analytical way and at the end I did the exams. This meant also meditating on shamata. In this meditation – one has the aim of liberating oneself from conditioned existence. Without having vipassana (profound view), it is not possible to achieve this goal.

When one practices shamata, one should carry out analytical meditations on specific objects. In the beginning this is very difficult, but with time it will become possible to actualize these two meditations in a unified way. Due to this unification there arises great flexibility in the body and in the mind, which is then followed by the arising of bliss. With these results of elasticity and bliss one is able to meditate on any object. It is said that if one chooses to meditate on a table, for example, then this will not bring any merit. However, if one meditates on a statue of a buddha, then one will create great merit because one is meditating on a being who has succeeded in eliminating all of the obscurations and has attained all the positive qualities of omniscience. If, in the practice of unifying shamata and vipassana, one chooses an object like impermanence or emptiness, it is possible that one will simultaneously enter the path of preparation. To be more specific, after having completed the unified meditation of shamata and vipassana on impermanence, one will enter the path of accumulation, which is the first of the five paths. Then, while realizing the unification of shamata and vipassana, one enters simultaneously into the path of preparation. In the same way, we can apply this method with regard to emptiness. The ability to have a direct realization of subtle impermanence occurs when one is able to perceive the sixty-four instants of a finger snap. The intelligence has to be so acute as to perceive the many instants of the finger snap, and only then can one say that a person has reached the understanding of subtle impermanence. This is not talking about intellectual comprehension, but about direct realization.

There is a request to be able to meet the tantric vehicle. The first verse talks about the three types of people and the three different purposes, as well as how a person should be qualified for this practice. Amongst all the tantras, the vajratantra is the supreme and it is those beings who are most fortunate: The request is as follows: “Please give me the inspiration so that I am able to practice the tantra without difficulty.”

## Conclusion

When Lama Tsongkhapa finished composing one of his commentaries, the thirty syllables absorbed into a rock. This was because this text was very famous and important. Even today one can see these syllables imprinted in the rock that has been covered with gold. The disciples of Lama Tsongkhapa who attended this event asked what the significance of this extraordinary sign was and he responded that in the future, in this same spot, a monastery would be constructed called Madhyamika. It later came to pass that the monastery of Sera was constructed there, which specialized in the study of the Madhyamika texts. In fact, the geshe who graduate in Madhyamika study, debate their exams in this monastery. The study of the view of the middle way, or Madhyamika, is divided into the ancient and modern views. The commentary on the modern view was composed by Getsun Chokyi Gyeltsen, who was a manifestation of Manjushri (the eighth Karmapa had predicted that Getsun Chokyi Gyeltsen would be a manifestation of Manjushri). The Madhyamika view is divided into three aspects: the base, the path, and the result. The aspect of the base corresponds to the two truths: conventional and ultimate, and the principal subject is sunyata – the emptiness of phenomena. The aspect of the path corresponds to the realization of sunyata – which is the method for being able to gradually understand it and then to realize it directly. The aspect of the result concerns the method for abandoning the obstacles and the obscurations to the attainment of nirvana and omniscience. The study of the Madhyamika view is said to be the central method for the development of wisdom.

There are six types of Madhyamika texts and the understanding of the middle way is of two types: the aspect of the vast, and the aspect of the profound. The understanding of the vast aspect concerns the conventionality of natural emptiness, while understanding of the profound aspect concerns the direct understanding of emptiness – that is to say, that phenomena exist only through imputation by thought and by name. When we talk of conventionalities, this refers to the study and comprehension of the five paths and the ten levels of a bodhisattva. When one studies the Madhyamika view, one studies the three types of dharma: compassion, wisdom, and bodhicitta – which are the causes of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. The sravakas and pratyekabuddhas are born from the buddhas. By this, we mean that they are born from the teachings of the buddhas. Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas; bodhisattvas are born from compassion, non-dual wisdom, and bodhicitta. The real base of the three vehicles is compassion. The Buddha gave teachings because of his infinite compassion to those with a small, medium, and great motivation.

The nature of compassion is the mental attitude that ardently desires to liberate beings from suffering. Chandrakirti composed the most famous commentary on the Madhyamika view and, at the beginning, in the verses of homage, praised great compassion. In any practice of dharma the thought of compassion is important at the beginning because it is like a seed, in the middle because it is like water and fertilizer, and at the end because it is needed to care for growth, being the basis for the attainment of enlightenment for the benefit of all mother sentient beings. In practicing the path, in order to cultivate compassion one generates bodhicitta and with this one practices the actions of a bodhisattva. Compassion is distinguished by three aspects: compassion with regard to sentient beings, compassion with regard to phenomena, and compassion without reference. To generate compassion in one's own mental continuum, it is necessary to reflect on the conditioned and suffering nature of cyclic existence. One of the principal causes that binds the individual in conditioned existence is the conception of true

existence from its own side. This concept of an “I”, day after day, reinforces attachment and the observance of “mine.” The mistaken concept of an “I” and the thought of “mine” fundamentally condition the contaminated actions of beings and bind them to the wheel of cyclic existence, which is permeated by suffering. In addition, the “I” and “mine” create imbalance and duality in our feelings of love and compassion, and are a strong obstacle to the generation of bodhicitta. With this imbalance one creates feelings of friendship, aversion, and neutrality, which are generated principally by attachment. The attachment to things that produces continued rebirth in conditioned existence is always caused by actions that are contaminated by feelings of aversion and hatred. The happiness that we experience in conditioned existence is false because it is not stable and it ends. The nature of samsara is without essence, and there is not anything that is certain. The things that can be attained can then be lost, such as material things like one’s social position and prestige. The freedom that one attains can be lost, and serenity and peace are continually jeopardized. The rapport between family and friends, or between nations, is often jeopardized, so we are able to say that in samsara there is nothing certain or stable. The nature of samsara is impermanent and transforming continuously: therefore, to develop the consciousness that understands the reality of impermanence helps the individual to be liberated from attachment and allows one to develop renunciation for conditioned existence. Samsara is pervaded by continuous suffering, and the only way to escape is the practice of the virtuous dharma. The desire to liberate oneself from samsara arises with the understanding of the meaning of renunciation, which is generated with an understanding of the various forms of physical and mental suffering that one experiences. All beings experience this suffering and the feeling of compassion that desires not only one’s own liberation, but also that of all sentient beings. Renunciation is the basis of compassion, and when one realizes true renunciation one is able to liberate oneself from samsara.

When my friends and I went to visit the abbot of the Gyu Me tantric college, we spoke about Tibet and Lhasa and, remembering these things, the abbot cried. In Tibet, Gyu Me had more than five hundred monks. When it was reestablished in the south of India after the Chinese invasion it had just a few dozen.

After completing my studies at Sera Je, I entered the monastery of Gyu Me to begin the tantric texts. In the first year I studied the texts of Guhyasamaja composed by Chandrakirti and Lama Tsongkhapa. For these studies one uses the root text and four commentaries. The root text explains the five levels. The first of these concerns the stage of kye rim (generation) and contains a detailed explanation of the formation of the Guhyasamaja mandala. This extraordinary text was composed at the foundation of Gyu Me. In addition to this, one studies a famous text by a disciple of Lama Tsongkhapa.

The main practice of tantra is the transformation of the three bodies into the path. At the moment of death the body is transformed into the dharmakaya (wisdom body); in the intermediate stage (bardo) it is transformed into the sambogakaya (fruition body); and at the moment of rebirth it is transformed into the nirmanakaya (emanation body). One trains in these transformations during one’s life – in the periods when we sleep, dream, and wake.

The second level concerns the completion stage. The third concerns the illusory body. The fourth concerns the clear light. Finally, the fifth concerns the stage of unification of the illusory body and the clear light. At the end of studying the tantra of Guhyasamaja, I began to study the tantra of Chakrasamvara (Heruka), composed by Lama Tsongkhapa.



However, I studied the Guhyasamaja tantra in most detail. After about one year at Gyu Me, His Holiness, Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama asked me to return to Sera Je to give the debate exams to attain the promotion to geshe lharampa, which completes the studies at Sera Je. It was in 1971, in the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama that I took the debate exam and attained my qualification.

Following that, I received tantric teachings from His Holiness and from his two main tutors, Kyabje Ling Rinpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, on the tantras of Guhyasamaja, Chakrasamvara, and Yamantaka. I studied other special tantric texts, and received teachings on the tantras of Heruka and Dorjeneljorma and the Six Yogas of Naropa. I returned then to Dalhousie, to Gyu Me monastery, and on another occasion I received more teachings on Guhyasamaja from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

After having completed these studies, His Holiness transferred me to an area in southern India, where I was responsible for agricultural works and construction in an area that was given by the Indian government to the Tibetan population. This responsibility lasted for two months and then I received another communication from His Holiness asking me to go to the Sanskrit University of Varanasi to complete some philosophical research on the perfection of wisdom texts, in particular, regarding the three types of texts known as the three versions of the Prajnaparamita.

In this same period I was engaged in memorizing the root text of the tantra of Guhyasamaja because I was preparing for exams that I had to give regarding my tantric studies. This text was composed of eighty-two pages and was composed at the founding of Gyu Me. I took the oral exam and then returned to the University of Varanasi, where I completed the research on the Prajnaparamita, which I concluded by writing a thesis, copies of which are kept at the university. I returned again to Gyu Me monastery and became the disciplinarian (gyi gu) for some months and when this job ended I returned again to work in the area conceded by the Indian government, which was in the area next to the monasteries of Sera Je and Sera Me. The work that I was directing was used to sustain the monastery and all the monks had to spend some of their time working in the fields.

One day I received a letter from my friend and fellow student Lama Thubten Yeshe, in which he asked me if I would accept an invitation to come to New Zealand to teach in a dharma center. I didn't feel that I could accept without consulting with His Holiness. His Holiness responded, saying that I should accept the invitation, but only for a period of two years. When I wrote to Lama Yeshe, he responded to me, saying that it was no longer necessary to go and that, if I wanted, I could go to the Manjushri center in England. However, before going directly to England, he suggested that I go to Kopan monastery in Nepal, where there were thirty western monks, whom I could teach Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakosha text. The letter was not sent directly to me however, but to my teacher Geshe Tashi Bum. Geshe Tashi Bum then wrote to the abbot of Gyu Me monastery kindly asking him to let me go to Kopan to teach the western monks. At this time, I received a simultaneous request from the library in Dharamsala, but I opted for Nepal to teach the westerners.

Before leaving, I went to Drepung monastery since His Holiness Kyabje Ling Rinpoche was giving teachings on the mental training. Then I went to Ganden monastery to receive teachings from His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche on the ten permissions of Vajrapani, and on the fifteen permissions of Abeshamala. I also received teachings on Guhyasamaja, with the special permission of Jampel Dorje and teachings on the brief version of the Lam

Rim. Then I received the special permission of the protector of the Gelugpa school, Dorje Shugden, and the day after that, the protectress Palden Lhamo, and this was the last teaching that I received from His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche.

From Song Rinpoche I received the initiation of Hayagriva. I left for Nepal and Kopan, where there was a study program, and I taught the Abhidharma to the westerners; while to the young Tibetan and Nepali monks I taught the initial selected texts for their studies and the fundamental texts on logic. In this period of my residence at Kopan His Holiness Serkong Rinpoche came to visit us and I received the initiation of Rinchen Gyatso from him.

Once I finished with my duties at Kopan, I was quickly engaged by Lama Yeshe to travel to the west where he introduced me to three countries: France, Spain, and Italy, between which I could choose my landing place.

I understood that Lama Yeshe wanted me to go to Italy, which, without difficulty, I chose. They were beginning the preparation of all the documents to obtain an entry visa and a residence permit. At the beginning, they had many complications and the time was stretching out and Lama Yeshe wrote to Massimo Corona in Italy, urging him to complete all the documentation, otherwise there would be the risk of my not coming. Lama Yeshe also said that, if I wanted to, I could go to Australia. I responded that I didn't have any problem, and that I wanted to do what he desired.

Luca Corona responded to Lama Yeshe, saying that they were getting all of the necessary documents, emphasizing not to say that Geshe Jampa Gyatso would not be coming to Italy, since the Italians had chosen him and were very anxious for his arrival. Finally the documents arrived and I was able to leave.

I end this biography with the hope that it may be of benefit to all.